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CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

SOME SUGGESTIONS

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OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL, EXTENSION TRAINING CENTRE
14 FEB 1957
T. KALLUPATTI

BY
RAJENDRA PRASAD

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The thirteenfold constructive programme, which Gandhiji placed before us in *Harijan* of 18th August 1940 and which he has again stressed in his recent pamphlet entitled *Constructive Programme, Its Meaning and Place*, demands detailed instructions so that workers may know how to give effect to it. I trust the following ways and means that I am venturing to place before them will provide some guidance.

1. HINDU-MUSLIM OR COMMUNAL UNITY

It may at once be admitted that the present communal disunity is due to mutual distrust and suspicion. It has so vitiated national life that suspicion of each other's motives has crept into spheres of religious performances, language, culture, mode of life, education, economic freedom and political power — in fact, into every sphere of life.

Mutual trust will be automatically established only if we renounce the use of force under all circumstances for enforcing what we consider our right or preventing the abuse of what the opponent considers his right. The following illustrations of occasions on which trouble ordinarily arises will explain how, in my opinion, non-violence may be effectively employed.

(i) A Muslim wants to sacrifice a cow or slaughter it for food. A Hindu will try to dissuade him from carrying out his wish by friendly argument and by appealing to him not to offend Hindu sentiments. In no circumstances will he or a group of Hindus resort to violence to prevent the act.

(ii) Similarly, if a Hindu takes out the image of Durga in procession before a mosque and the Muslim is even disturbed during his prayer time by the music, the latter may

not use force but will try his level best to dissuade the Hindu by entreaty.

(iii) If either a Muslim or a Hindu wishes to build a mosque or dedicate a temple to an image on his own land, either should recognize the right of the other.

(iv) If the *azan* of the Muslim or the *arati* of the Hindu disturbs either party, the temporary inconvenience must be borne with due regard to each other's feelings.

(v) To preach and propagate one's religion is the right of everyone. But in exercising the right the utmost care must be taken not to hurt the feelings of those belonging to other faiths by decrying their creeds or their founders or revered saints.

(vi) Conversion of a person from one faith to another is a common source of rousing bitter feelings of revenge. This should not be.

(vii) In the matter of kidnapping the members of the offending community should consider it a point of honour with them to bring the guilty to book.

(viii) Other illustrations may be given of occasions which lead to violence between the parties concerned. Violence should be eschewed under all circumstances. If friendly persuasion fails, resort can always be had to arbitration by an impartial person or persons acceptable to both parties. If one party refuses to have arbitration, the non-violent method of protest through self-suffering may be used in order to melt the opponent's heart, provided it is a clear case and the person concerned is strong enough to resist the evil in this way. If a non-violent protest is impossible, justice may even be sought in law courts or from other constituted authority. What applies to Hindus and Muslims applies equally to all communities.

(ix) Of late much bad blood seems to be caused by what are said to be attacks on the culture of a particular community by another. This may not cause riots, but it is no less serious for it spreads the poison in an insidious manner. Then, too, there is such a thing as an insidious force which a majority may use constantly against a minority. Conversely a minority may exercise disproportionate power

on account of its wealth, physical strength or even because of the cowardice of others. In all these cases it should be the constant endeavour of all to try to set at rest the doubts and suspicions of others by their own lives and prove from their day-to-day activity that no harm is intended and that all are free to live and think as they like. Thus, for example, there should be perfect freedom for everyone regarding language, regarding the education of children and the ordering of their lives.

(x) In the matter of trades and professions there should not be unhealthy rivalry or jealousy. No trade or profession may be said to be the exclusive right of any one community. Everyone should be free to carry on the trade or profession he likes. If in any big concern, shop or factory the owner employs members of his own community, it should not be made a bone of contention.

(xi) Political power perhaps furnishes the most subtle and devastating causes for mutual distrust and suspicion. Every community should cast out once and for all the desire or ambition to rule over others. India has so many communities that it is impossible to have peace and prosperity if any one of them tries to establish its supremacy. It should be the duty of members of one community to seek and utilize every opportunity of doing a good turn to members of other communities. Generosity and justice need not be contradictory terms. Generosity is, in fact, a potent force in removing mistrust and ill-will. Cowardice and fear should have no place in our dealings. It is for political parties to devise ways and means of a political nature for bridging the present gulf, but individual workers can make an enormous contribution by setting an example of tolerance and patience in the face of the utmost provocation. It should be within the bounds of possibility for everyone to cultivate intimate friendship with at least one member of the other community. It is such small seeds well sown that will grow into fruitful trees. One golden rule to be scrupulously observed is not to judge others. It is always best to turn the searchlight inwards and lay one's finger on one's own weakness and shortcomings. It follows, therefore, that in

times of communal strife members of each community should try to set right their own thoughts and actions and those of their own community and leave the other community to its own members. Statements hastily issued to the Press, inaccuracy in facts, imputation of motives, and retaliation create bad blood and make reconciliation difficult. Truth must be brought to light, but statements and counter-statements often aggravate rather than mitigate ill-will.

(xii) The organization of bands of men and women imbued with the spirit of non-violence and willing to lay down their lives, if necessary, is most desirable both from the point of view of preventing and of controlling communal riots. Every volunteer of such a *Shantidal* must undergo a period of training. The task is a difficult one and requires courage and faith of the highest order. Fitness for such work can best come from long apprenticeship in the service of all communities. Whenever and wherever possible, members of one community should make it a point of living among and serving members of other communities. This would open the way to intimate social contacts and create mutual understanding. Indeed such workers will not only be able to prevent riots but will also be able to stop their spread for they will be beloved of the people.

(xiii) A standing committee of members of all communities for every town and group of villages commanding the confidence of the people would be of great help and might well serve as a board of arbitration in cases of dispute.

II. THE REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY

Untouchability is a most ugly manifestation of *himsa* in our social life. It is not less reprehensible because it has the sanction of long continued and more or less universal usage amongst the Hindus. It is a definite form of cruelty which has been falsely sanctified as a religious institution. So deep is the canker that even among the so-called untouchables one section observes and practises it against another in spite of the fact that all of them are so treated by the so-called higher castes. But whatever the causes and origin of this evil custom it has to be removed, root and branch,

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if, as Gandhiji has often and so aptly said, Hinduism is to live.

Untouchability, as it is practised in different parts of India, has varying grades. The so-called untouchables have been relegated to the performance of certain tasks or professions which are considered dirty by the higher castes. Their dwellings, generally hovels, are segregated from those of others. Access to temples, educational institutions, wells and tanks, hotels, restaurants and even public conveyances is denied to them. They are, therefore, backward in education, extremely poor and mostly landless.

It is necessary to give a true picture of their disabilities and difficulties so that workers may realize the immediate importance and significance of the steps suggested for the removal of this terrible blot on society.

Grades of Untouchability

(i) In some parts of the country the very sight of a Harijan by a caste Hindu after a bath, at meal time or when proceeding to the temple is considered to be pollution. The wretched Harijan is sometimes required to cry out and warn people of his approach as lepers are reported to have done in olden times.

(ii) He is banned from walking on certain streets and has to keep a certain distance from the caste Hindus. He may not sit on the same bench or carpet. He may not enter the house. Even an outer verandah is forbidden to him. Anything he touches is polluted. He may never come in the proximity of a kitchen. He may not draw water from a well which caste Hindus use; he may not even take water from the same tank. The services of a barber are denied to him. In some places he may not dress as others do; his womenfolk may not wear ornaments; he is not allowed to enjoy the same kind of festivities as other Hindus on occasions of marriage, birth or death.

(iii) Apart from not being allowed to enter a temple he may not, in certain places, even walk on the street near it or bathe in sacred tanks or rivers where caste Hindus bathe. He may not read the scriptures. He is neither served

by the same priest who serves other castes, nor does the same priest officiate in the untouchable's house on occasions like birth, death or marriage.

Practical Suggestions

(i) The worker has, first of all, to cast out untouchability from his own life. He must free his mind of all sense of high and low on account of birth or profession or calling. He may not refuse to sit on the same bench or bed or carpet as an untouchable. Physical contact in serving Harijans may not repel him. He should try to have a Harijan in his home as a member of the family even though he may be used for domestic work. He shall not observe untouchability in the matter of food or drink provided these are clean. This does not of course mean eating out of the same plate or drinking out of the same tumbler. These are insanitary habits which should be avoided even with one's own kith and kin. It is probable that the worker will have great opposition from his family members and friends in carrying out these reforms, but he will have bravely to face this without anger and ill-will. Having become a convert himself he will not force his view on others, not even on his family members. He will try to make all he comes in contact with of his way of thinking by reasoning and persuasion and most of all by the purity and dedication to service of his own life.

(ii) Having shed untouchability in his own life it will be right for him to appeal to his neighbours to allow Harijans to draw water from wells and bathe in tanks and rivers where others bathe and wash. He will plead with the school authorities and parents of caste Hindu children to admit Harijan children to schools. In fact he will help to remove all their disabilities. Perhaps the most difficult citadel to storm and conquer will be the priests and temple-goers. But ceaseless propaganda for this and other reforms is an essential part of the programme. Help may, where possible, be sought from legislation and law courts, and there will probably be cases or occasions when *satyagraha* may have to be offered on behalf of this section of suffering humanity.

(iii) So much for reforming the caste Hindu mind. But equally important is the work of educating and reforming the Harijans themselves. Ages of suppression have dealt hardly with them. Apart from the inferiority complex from which they suffer they have become addicted to certain habits, e. g. carrion-eating, which must be eradicated. They must be taught to give up the practice of untouchability amongst themselves; they have to be made to look upon their work of scavenging as an honourable task, not to be despised; they should be educated in personal hygiene and taught the value and necessity of clean living. The worker will not hesitate to do scavenging himself and thereby show the Harijans not only the dignity of all labour but also prove that it is possible to scavenge and yet live cleanly. The work of sweepers is made far more disagreeable by the carelessness and dirty habits of the average person. The people in the worker's area should be appealed to and taught how to use latrines and drains properly. Trench latrines may be introduced where possible, and people should be taught to cover excreta properly with clean earth. Ashrams where the inmates do their own scavenging contribute greatly — even though in an indirect manner — towards the removal of untouchability. Caste Hindus should have no objection to taking up the tanning industry and thereby raise its status and help the Harijans to do that work cleanly and in the most beneficial manner. Drink and gambling are habits which have taken a hold of Harijans. There is ample room for reform among them in these spheres.

It is only by assiduous and untiring labour in these three spheres, viz. removal of the sin of untouchability in one's own life, propaganda for its removal among the so-called higher castes, and service of the Harijans themselves, that the problem can be successfully tackled.

(iv) I have not considered it necessary here to deal in detail with the political rights and duties of this community. Needless to say they are entitled to them every whit as much as anyone else.

(v) Attempts are often made to provide separate wells, schools and hostels for Harijans and even separate temples.

Far from befriending them this really tends to perpetuate their separateness and should not, therefore, be ordinarily encouraged. But they may only be resorted to as a temporary measure where the Harijans are definitely suffering physical hardship in the absence of any facility.

There is another problem which is of a similar kind and needs a band of workers with enthusiasm and devotion to tackle it. India has a large population of what are known as *Adibasis* or aboriginals residing in different parts of the country—concentrated largely in jungles and hilly tracts. They are backward in education, and their economic condition is also deplorable. Christian Missionaries have done good educational work amongst them, but there is much that remains to be done. They have been neglected by us, and work of education and general uplift amongst them is necessary. It has to be undertaken on a large scale and has to be more or less on the same lines as that among the Harijans.

III. PROHIBITION

The evils resulting from drink and drugs need not be detailed here. Suffice it to say that the addict to these is not only physically ruined but also becomes a moral degenerate.

Considerable literature on the evils of alcoholism and drugs is available. It should be obtained and studied by those who feel the urge to work amongst this type of fallen humanity. But far more useful than knowledge derived from books will be the personal contacts with the victims which it should be the duty of the worker to make. They stand in dire need of befriending and uplifting. Their life and surroundings, the miseries wrought among families, the starvation and gloom that reign in their homes are the best material for propaganda whether for organizations or individual workers. Propaganda may take the form of magic lantern slides or cinema pictures which will show the evil consequences of drink on the health of the addict, how each organ of his body deteriorates, how the nervous system cracks, and how he loses all self-control and becomes not

only a physical but a moral wreck, how his family starves. Stories from life showing the contrast between the life and home of a drunkard and that of a teetotaller may be related or shown on the movies to bring home the evil to the victim.

Practical ways of weaning them from the habit are to provide them with innocent drinks, to open clubs for them where they may play games and indulge in healthful recreation, and generally to befriend them during their leisure hours. No doubt such work will need funds and can best be carried out by organizations, but the individual worker can do a great deal if he visits the homes of the addicts and tries to win their confidence.

IV. KHADI

Khadi has been in the public eye since Gandhiji's return home from South Africa. So much has been written about it and so much work too has been done in connection with it that it is not necessary to dilate at length on its necessity and potentiality.

The moment for the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving and other subsidiary processes is based on two fundamental facts of Indian life. 80 % of India's population is either engaged in or dependent on agriculture, but inasmuch as agriculture does not occupy the entire time of the agriculturist, he has plenty of leisure to spare which might well be devoted to a supplementary occupation. Spinning and weaving not only supply this need, not only solve the problem of clothing the villager but also make a substantial addition to his slender resources. It has never been suggested that those who can earn more in any other occupation should give up their work and take to spinning. It is pre-eminently a supplementary industry.

Khadi may be produced for sale as also for use by the producer himself. The khadi produced for sale is for those who do not spin themselves. Efforts have been made to improve the tools of production in order to produce better and finer yarn. The results are astonishing. The improvement in the texture of khadi, to say nothing of the variety

now available, as compared with the first efforts of twenty two years ago is there for all to see. The most fastidious tastes can be satisfied. But khadi cannot, indeed it is not meant to, compete with mill cloth. It should be purchased and used to the exclusion of all other cloth regardless of its higher cost by those who love the villager and stand for India's freedom. The A. I. S. A. has opened several production and sale centres, and each worker has to become a self-appointed agent for all such. He should study the economics and ethics of khadi thoroughly so that he may be able effectually to carry its message of salvation and uplift to every home. By creating a love of and demand for khadi in his locality he will lessen the difficulty experienced by many *bhandars* of accumulated stocks and consequent locking up of capital.

One warning is necessary in the sphere of sales. The main object of the movement is to help the poorest and humblest among us and enable them to earn an honest living through an honourable occupation. It follows that genuine khadi is only that which subserves and fulfils this purpose. To that end the A. I. S. A., in complete contrast to all Employers' Associations, decided unasked by the spinners to try as soon as possible to give them a minimum wage of 8 annas per day of 8 hours' work. The ideal has not yet been attained, but an immediate rise of 3 annas per day from the former 1 anna was given a few years ago, and khadi sales, as was feared at first by many workers, have not suffered owing to the consequent rise in its price. But exploitation of the poor spinners and weavers still continues by many who would do so for personal gain. In spite of the A. I. S. A.'s resolve to give certificates only to those individuals or institutions that sell khadi after giving the minimum wage to the workers, there are many who take a mean advantage of the extreme poverty of the spinners and weavers and by paying them a pittance sell hand-woven and hand-spun at cheaper rates. It is the workers' duty to warn everyone against buying such uncertified khadi.

But while khadi production for sale must continue to be properly organized, hand-spun and hand-woven can become universal only if its utility in national economy is

brought home to the people at large and they take to spinning. A spinner with average skill can spin about 400 yards in an hour, which means 12,000 yards a month if he spins an hour a day. Of course the fineness of the yarn depends on the quality of the slivers and the skill of the spinner. But if we take the average count to be 10 to 12, 12,000 yards of yarn will yield about 4 square yards of khadi. A person can, therefore, spin enough yarn to give himself 48 square yards of cloth in a year with only an hour's spinning a day. The average consumption of cloth in our country is not more than 16 yards per head. An average spinner can thus produce enough cloth for 3 persons. It is perfectly easy for the agriculturist as well as those engaged in the so-called liberal professions to spare an hour every day for spinning. The national gain will be enormous. 16 yards of mill cloth cost at least Rs. 4. An addition of even Rs. 4 per head per annum to the slender resources of our people is a definite material gain, to say nothing of the corporate and moral benefit acquired through self-sufficiency in the matter of clothing. In a family of five, if two persons spin regularly for one hour every day, they can clothe the entire family.

Every worker should spin enough for his own requirements. He should be an efficient spinner on the *charkha* the *dhanush takli* and the *takli*. He should have a thorough knowledge of all the processes prior to spinning—picking, cleaning, ginning, carding, slivering—and spinning. He should know how to mend the wheel and the *dhanush takli* if anything goes wrong with them. All his tools should always be clean and in good order. By his aptness, keenness, intimate knowledge of his work, and personal example he will be able to draw people to khadi as no amount of propaganda and argument can. He should have knowledge of the art of weaving also. He may leave the work of spinning for wages to be organized by the A. I. S. A. His main work should be to organize spinning from the point of view of self-sufficiency. No capital is required for this purpose. All that is required n the worker in addition to the above qualifications is skill in imparting his knowledge to others. Each worker may

make a plan according to his circumstances and the conditions of his locality. If he were to resolve to make 12 persons self-sufficient in khadi in six months and as efficient and keen spinners as himself, he will have done a great deal towards inducing others to take to it. There is hardly a village where cotton is not grown or where it cannot be had on payment. As a matter of fact every agriculturist should be persuaded to grow enough cotton to serve his personal requirements. There is again hardly a locality where there are no weavers perishing for want of employment. All this soil is ready for the worker to till and cultivate. Faith, zeal, intelligence and efficiency in the art of khadi-making alone are required for revolutionizing the entire face of village life.

V. OTHER VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

Village industry par excellence is obviously agriculture, for it provides us with all the articles of food as also the raw material for clothing. But here industry has a technical meaning. The better word, perhaps, is handicrafts. It is the decay of handicrafts in our villages that has been the cause of their ruin and made agriculture itself uninteresting and even unprofitable. For the agriculturist is idle for practically, if not more than, half the year.

We have seen under the caption of khadi how usefully hand-spinning and hand-weaving can occupy the leisure hours of the agriculturist. We will now consider how the main object of the All India Village Industries Association, founded by Gandhiji for the purpose of making the village self-sufficient through the revival and improvement of indigenous handicrafts, can be achieved and how beneficial such revival will be from the point of view of the physical, material and moral prosperity of our people.

All grain is produced in the field. Wheat and other grains have to be ground into flour, paddy has to be husked and made into rice, pulses have to be broken and the husk removed from the kernel. All these processes used in the old days to be performed in the village homes, but now rice, flour and *dal* mills have largely displaced the *dhenki* and

chakki and have not only caused unemployment but have also reduced the vitamin value of food to the detriment of our bodily health. The same applies to oil seeds. Oil being an essential element of diet we may not allow it to be deprived of its vitamins. Sugar is an important item in our daily food. Sugarcane is easily grown, and from time immemorial the village *kolhus* have provided the sugar requirements of the people. But now mills have stepped in here too. Another method of getting sugar in an easily assimilable form is honey from bees. The latter can be reared without much difficulty or labour. Vegetables and fruits are important items of diet and can and should be grown in villages. Last, though by no means least, there is milk and its products which necessitate knowledge of dairying and care and scientific breeding of cattle. Special attention has therefore to be paid to:

(a) Improved methods of agriculture for producing grain, cotton, sugarcane.

(b) Revival of the *dhenki* and *chakki* for husking paddy, grinding wheat and breaking pulses.

(c) Revival of oil *ghanis* for extracting oil from oil seeds.

(d) Revival of *kolhus* for making *gur* out of sugarcane.

(e) Development of the science of bee-keeping.

(f) Scientific methods of dairying and breeding of cattle.

(g) Vegetable and fruit culture.

(h) The general turning of waste into wealth as in the matter of good manure, for which intelligent use of human and animal excreta, vegetable and fruit peel, leavings of food, leaves, ashes, bones and flesh of dead animals etc. is of enormous value.

(i) The improvements of all tools and implements for agricultural purposes and their production and manufacture in the villages themselves.

After food and clothing comes shelter. Sometimes, for social reasons, even more importance is attached to dwelling houses than to food and clothing. It is important from the point of view of village economy to see that as far as possible our houses are made with materials found in the village

and by the employment of village labour. There is an economy in nature which the modern age seems to overlook. Geologists say that it takes millions of years to produce a lager of coal, mineral oil, iron ore or any other metal or mine product. We use coal, metals and mineral oils lavishly without any thought of replacing what we consume. Nature invariably observes this economy but we interfere with nature, in a sense, and in the pride of our scientific knowledge, we think nothing of exhausting nature's store. Far-sighted people have already begun to speculate as to the time in which the world's store of oil, coal and metals will be exhausted if we continue to use them as extravagantly as we do today. But that is a problem primarily for the mechine-driven countries to face. Our village economy depends on replacing what we spend. Take the fuel used in villages, for example. We use stalks of a pulse like *arhar* and wood, and our stock can never fail. In house building, therefore, we should also use such material as is easily replaceable. Bricks and tiles can be baked without coal, and rafters and doors can be made out of our endless store of timber. A minimum of metal need be used, and comfortable dwelling houses can be constructed without much cost. We should remember that the most wonderful and durable architecture that we have in the world was built with such materials before coal, cement and steel came into use.

Apart from these absolutely essential articles of daily use there are scores of others that man needs today with more or less urgency. These range from a needle or pin to a motor-car, a railway train or ship, from pen and ink to a printing press, from an earthen wick to electricity and so on. We have to choose wisely from among our requirements and see what can be best and easily manufactured in villages. It will be found that there are hundreds of articles which village artisans can easily produce. There are places where raw material is easily available, where tradition still persists of making particular things, and where climatic and other considerations make them indispensable. We have to seek out and encourage all such handicrafts. Take paper-making, for example, or leather articles. Raw material and workers

are available for both these industries in every village. What is needed is alertness and circumspection and above all the conviction that in a country like ours with its vast resources and immense population, largely unemployed, there must and can be found employment for all. Large-scale industry may be necessary for certain of our requirements, but our village life, our culture and art have languished because our cottage industries have died to a large extent. These must be revived, if village India has to be resuscitated. Therefore as Gandhiji has so poetically described it let khadi be the sun round which all the lesser planets will revolve, and let all who wish to serve the villages use as far as possible nothing but village products.

VI. VILLAGE SANITATION

No one will deny that one of the primary necessities of a village is proper sanitation. People simply do not know how and do not seem to care to keep their surroundings or even their persons and personal habitations clean and sanitary. The result is disease, epidemics and a general deterioration in the health of the people. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" is no idle saying. It is true not only in a physical but also in a moral and spiritual sense.

Each worker should acquire sanitary habits. His own person should be clean in every detail. His clothes and other belongings should be spotless and kept tidily. Dirt has been aptly described as "matter out of place". Thus the evil habits of throwing anything almost anywhere, of spitting and cleaning the nose in the house or verandah or compounds of houses or on the streets, of answering the calls of nature near the dwelling houses or in drains or on public thoroughfares or near tanks and rivers without so much as covering the excreta with clean earth, have got to be eliminated. All these are potent causes of disease and a perfect nuisance for our neighbours. An enormous amount of wealth is wasted too by these not being conserved properly as they should be for purposes of manure.

Village sanitation can be easily improved, if the inhabitants are inspired with an intelligent understanding of

the dangers and ugliness of insanitation and insanitary habits. The following methods may be adopted :

(i) Roads leading to and streets in a village should be daily swept and cleaned. No refuse should be thrown on them. Such should be put into dust-bins specially kept for the purpose and which can later be emptied in the manure pits. No one including children may answer the calls of nature on public thoroughfares. Water from drains should not flow on to the streets. Drain water should be so conducted as to flow where it can be utilized, say, for a kitchen garden.

(ii) If fields are used for answering the calls of nature, the excreta should invariably be well covered up with clean earth. A better plan is to use small movable latrines which can be constructed quite cheaply with mats fixed on either bamboo or wooden frames placed over trenches one to two feet deep and of similar width. Here too the excreta has always to be covered with clean earth. In time it gets automatically converted into manure, and thus what is a public nuisance and utterly wasted today can become wealth for the poor agriculturist.

(iii) Cattle dung, refuse, vegetable and fruit peel etc. can all be similarly converted into manure.

(iv) All sources of water supply, e. g. tanks, wells as well as banks of rivers should be kept scrupulously clean. Today cattle are bathed and dirty vessels and soiled linen are washed in tanks whose water is often used for drinking or cooking. Well and river water is similarly polluted by dirty habits and carelessness born of ignorance. The villager must be enlightened in this respect.

(v) It should be borne in mind that the health of a village depends to a large extent on the health of each individual, and that even one person of insanitary habits is a menace to the population. Groups of young men and women can band themselves into volunteer corps for educating the villagers in the matter of sanitation. Workers must take a hand in scavenging themselves inasmuch as personal example is the best means of propaganda.

VII. NEW OR BASIC EDUCATION

Basic education has been given to us by Gandhiji with special reference to Indian village life. Briefly it is a complete change from the present literacy system which has led us nowhere to imparting knowledge to every boy and girl by means of a craft. It aims at utilizing to the best advantage the natural creative instinct of a child. It educates him to use all his faculties, his eyes and his hands etc. in addition to training his mind. If properly imparted by teachers who love children and who are experts in the craft concerned, it will be found that the mental, moral and physical development of the child will be far greater than it is in our present-day schools. Gandhiji claims that such education will, if intelligently carried out, become self-supporting inasmuch as the products of the school will be salable in the vicinity or sold by the State whose duty it will be to dispose of them. This would *ipso facto* solve the present insurmountable difficulty of spreading primary education because of the lack of funds. In its initial stages spinning has been taken as the craft best suited to the village and also because the scientific knowledge of spinning is today greater than in other crafts. But it is by no means the only craft that can be taken. Those interested in this type of education should study the reports and the literature on the subject published by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh. From the latest report it will be seen what promising results have so far been achieved in spite of many limitations and difficulties. Educationists the world over have recognized the superior value of the method of education through 'doing', imparting knowledge through handicrafts, and in India it has a special value. Properly trained and enthusiastic men and women teachers are wanted to make the scheme the success it deserves to be.

VIII. ADULT EDUCATION

It is a tragedy but none the less true that only 7 or 8 per cent of the population of India is literate. And since mere literacy cannot be termed education, it may be said

that 95 % of persons are uneducated in the ordinary sense of the word. Of course even unlettered persons can be cultured, but it is obvious that knowledge of reading and writing does develop the mind and enables a person to get acquainted with the thoughts of others. Adult education must not, however, be confined to the knowledge of the 'three Rs'. It must include a great deal of other useful and essential general education.

Every worker can take up the work of removing illiteracy in his area. It will probably be found that the evening hour will be the most suitable for holding classes for adult education. Lighting arrangements will, therefore, have to be made. Books are not required. A small plank of wood or an earthen slate blackened with charcoal as in days of old can well serve the purpose of a blackboard. This and a piece of chalk or white earth are all that is required for imparting literacy which can be acquired in no time. Useful charts for this work have been prepared and can, if needed, be purchased at a small cost. But these are not really essential. Interest and enthusiasm on the part of the worker are far more necessary. Co-operative effort is very effective. Once a few adults have learnt how to read and write, a small library should be established in which suitable literature may gradually be collected and a daily newspaper provided.

An immense amount of general knowledge can be imparted by word of mouth. The old system of repeating the *Puranas* and other religious books among Hindus and of *Milad Shareef* among Muslims is efficacious. Our people imbibe their religious knowledge to a large extent from *kathas, pravachans, sankirtans* and *milads.* Useful knowledge of history, science, current events etc. can be imparted orally and through reading circles. But workers must acquire accurate knowledge themselves before they can begin to impart it to others. The field of adult education offers a grand opportunity for developing a sense of citizenship as also for inculcating a spirit of corporate endeavour among the people. Both are most essential factors in village reconstruction.

IX. UPLIFT OF WOMEN

The old tradition among Hindus is that woman is the *Shakti*—the origin and source of all power. She has been called the better half of man. But it is tragic that in our present-day society she does not play the great part she is meant or entitled to play, because of certain social customs and prejudices which have unfortunately become, as it were, a tradition. It must be realized that no society can make real progress, if one half of its members are suppressed. The child receives its earliest instruction from its mother, and a society with ignorant and suppressed women cannot hope to produce the best class of sons and daughters. We have, therefore, to banish from our hearts all ideas of the inferiority of women and give them their rightful place of absolute equality. This does not mean that woman should be made to do man's work or vice versa. Natural aptitude and limitations cannot be ignored. But apart from these there should be no distinction or restraint.

Workers should engage themselves in trying to remove such barriers and customs as are unnatural and unjust and have a detrimental effect on society:

(i) The purdah system should be abolished.

(ii) Women should be associated in all public work on lines of equality.

(iii) Child marriage must go.

(iv) Widow remarriage should be encouraged.

(v) Polygamy should be discouraged with a view to its ultimate abolition.

(vi) The inequalities and disabilities in law and custom under which women suffer should be sought to be removed.

(vii) Girls should be given equal opportunities with boys for education and should be made capable of earning a livelihood.

(viii) Women workers can best serve women. Adult education among women is most important as also is the cult of the charkha. Indeed spinning is woman's

special domain and can give her the valuable status of an economic unit in the family.

(ix) The medical and teaching professions and nursing are specially suited to women. Girls should be encouraged to go in for them. They can also be trained in many handicrafts.

(x) In this as in all other constructive work the worker has to begin reform in his own home. Only in this way will he be able to change the outlook in this matter of those with whom he comes in contact.

X. EDUCATION IN HYGIENE AND HEALTH

This has been covered to some extent under No. VI. But it is essential to emphasize the necessity of keeping the body and mind in a fit condition. To this end regular habits, a health-giving balanced diet, daily exercise, work, and above all a life of self-restraint are needed.

Many of us do not cultivate regular habits or keep to regular hours for work, sleep, food, etc. What we eat is often according to what is good to taste without regard to what is good for our bodies. We forget that we should eat in order to live. In the case of poor people a balanced diet is not wholly possible, but the well-to-do and middle classes need to pay great attention to this important factor in their lives. Where the poor fall ill through lack of nourishing food the well-to-do suffer from diseases due to overeating. It should be within the capacity of each one of us to regulate our diet according to our needs. The simpler the cooking, the more easily digestible is our food. The vitamin value of whole meal—grains, rice and pulses—has already been stressed. These with vegetables, onions and fruits like papaya, mango, banana, guava, tomato etc. which can be easily grown even in villages and milk and its products can constitute a wholesome diet.

Those who are engaged in hard physical labour do not stand in need of any other exercise, but for those who are engaged in sedentary occupations regular exercise is essential. Youths in schools and colleges often neglect to exercise their bodies with disastrous results to both body and mind. The

best exercise is of course that which enables some useful work to be performed in the course of it, but this may not be possible for everyone. Walking, healthful games or *yogic* exercises however, can be taken by everyone according as it suits him.

Simple food, clean living and regular exercise are not only health-giving but morally uplifting. For clean living a life of self-restraint is essential. However much a man may regulate his food and exercise he cannot really be termed healthy if he indulges in vice and has no control over his passions. Such control is impossible without a control on the mind. Purity of mind depends to a large extent on the nature of the food and exercise one takes, the type of life one leads, the company one keeps and the books one reads. Companions and literature should be chosen with the same care as food and exercise. A person who is sound in body and mind can influence and inspire others while his opposite will infect his environment with evil habits. It is essential, therefore, for workers to lead pure and healthy lives so that they may be able to spread the gospel of health and hygiene and thereby bring wealth and happiness to their neighbours.

XI. PROPAGATION OF RASHTRA BHASHA

India has suffered greatly by the imposition of a foreign language as the medium of instruction and of intercourse among the educated. The strain on a child of learning a foreign language is very great, and the tendency then is to concentrate on the language rather than on the substance of what is taught. It is an indisputable fact that instruction is best imparted through the mother tongue. It follows, therefore, that the provincial languages should form the natural vehicle for instruction and expression of our thought. At the same time a vast country like ours does need a common language for interprovincial intercourse and national purposes. This national language (*Rashtra Bhasha*) should be such as can be easily understood and learnt by all. We are fortunate that the language which is understood—even if it is not always spoken correctly— by the vast bulk of inhabitants

of Northern and Central India has much of its vocabulary in common with the provincial languages even where it is not spoken. It has thus the twofold advantage of being understood by nearly half the population of India as well as of possessing a vocabulary, a fair proportion of which, in varying degrees, is in common with the rest of India. It is this language — Hindustani — which has naturally been recognized as our national language, and it is the duty of every worker to acquire a good working knowledge of it. We do not need to enter into the existing sharp differences of opinion regarding its name etc. It is our duty to know the language and be able to read and write it in both the Devanagari (Hindi) and Urdu (Persian) scripts.

XII. CULTIVATING LOVE OF ONE'S OWN LANGUAGE

It has been stated under the preceding head that the cultivation of a national language is a necessity for national purposes. But the cultivation of one's mother tongue is equally necessary from the point of view of one's own growth, the preservation of one's culture, and as a means of expressing one's innermost thoughts. Our provincial languages alone can fulfil this need. They have their own literature which has withstood the ravages of time and has added to the spiritual and moral values of life. It is our duty not only to preserve this heritage but to seek to augment it. There need be no conflict between the provincial languages and the *Rashtra Bhasha*. Indeed they must progress hand in hand, each fulfilling its own purpose and acting and reacting healthily on the other. It is necessary for everyone to be proficient in the knowledge of his own mother tongue. In addition it would be advisable if dwellers of the North learnt a Southern language as Southerners learn the *Rashtra Bhasha*.

XIII. WORKING FOR ECONOMIC EQUALITY

There is no gainsaying the fact that an immense economic inequality prevails in present-day society. Not only are some countries much richer than others but even in the same country there are gross inequalities between individuals as also between sections of society. England and America

as countries are vastly richer than India. The average income of an Indian may be said to be about Rs. 50 per annum as against the similarly calculated income of Rs. 1,800 and Rs. 3,000 of the Englishman and the American respectively. Even in those countries, however, there are rich millionaires in contrast to the poor daily labourer who has to eke out an existence with the help of unemployment doles in dull seasons. In our own country we have the spectacle of a palace side by side with a hovel. Only in our country there are many more hovels than palaces! We know too that all wars and the most ghastly world war raging today have as their root cause the rivalry between nations for the possession of wealth and land. These will certainly continue so long as the present basis of society and outlook on life persist. Existing inequalities must, therefore, be removed, if peace and happiness are to reign over the earth. Attempts to achieve this end have been made by means of violent revolution. It remains to be seen whether what has been attained in this way will last if the violent force which brought it into being were to be removed. The most stable and lasting equality will certainly be that which is not imposed from outside but which grows from within as a result of voluntary control of the acquisitive and exploiting tendency in man. Such a change in outlook requires a training of the mind of the individual, and if the effort to bring it about were undertaken on a nation-wide scale, it would certainly be possible, though undoubtedly the task is fraught with difficulty. But such a state of mind can only come into being in a society based on non-violence. All men are not endowed with the same nature nor with an equal amount of talent, intelligence, and capacity for work. In present day society these inequalities are aggravated and increased by artificial social advantages or disadvantages of birth, education, income, etc. Force may remove artificial social conditions, but it cannot equalize the natural gifts of individuals. These gifts can be utilized either for the benefit of the individual or for the service of all. The society which is based on violence will naturally utilize them for the aggrandizement of the individual or the particular section of society or the country

to which he belongs. In a society based on non-violence they will be utilized for the benefit of all — but such a society has still to be established. Existing inequalities have to be minimized and finally removed in a non-violent manner. How can this be accomplished?

It is individuals who must make the beginning and spread the doctrine by their example. We must get rid of the notion that health and happiness depend on the riches we possess. We must realize that it is a moral duty to spend a minimum on our essential requirements and to hold the surplus in trust for the general good. 'Plain living and high thinking' do uplift, and the leaven of a simple and contented life among all workers in particular will definitely spread. Social honour or status based on possession or birth has to give place to honour and status based on character and service. The State may work towards this end while our ideal is in the making by judicious laws and taxation which encourage the removal of inequalities. But in a non-violent society the State will rarely, if ever, have need to interfere. While we are not masters in our own land we have to work as much as we can on the voluntary basis. Capitalists and factory owners may start with giving better wages and amenities of life to the workers, e. g. the wherewithal to supply themselves with good health-giving food and sufficient clothing, suitable living quarters, education for their children and healthy recreation and cultural facilities for them and those dependent on them. They may go further and divide the profits with the labourers. They may make the profits available for the country at large after retaining what is sufficient for their own requirements. Zamindars should treat their tenants fairly and justly and spend surplus incomes on the latter's vital requirements. The same applies to lawyers, doctors, etc. If all, who can, pool their surplus resources for the benefit of the masses, an immense beginning towards bringing in an equitable order will have been made. But the chief thing for the monied men is to limit their expenses so as to bring them on a level as far as possible with what should be possible for a labourer in an ideal society.

We have dealt with the thirteen items of the constructive programme which Gandhiji has specifically mentioned. There are certain others which may also be considered. As these are more or less of an organizational nature, they can be usefully employed for furthering the thirteenfold programme.

XIV. CONGRESS ORGANIZATION

Organizing the masses for the struggle for freedom is constructive work of first class importance. We have the general organization of the Congress. We may also endeavour to organize the *kisans*, labourers and students, for example. The work of these organizations may overlap to some extent; but if they are based on non-violence, conflict is impossible. And misunderstandings or differences can easily be resolved without leaving any trace of bitterness. It will be as well to deal with each of these in some detail.

The Congress organization consists of members belonging to all classes, creeds and races. Anyone who signs its creed and pays his annual subscription of four annas becomes a member and is eligible for election to any of its Committees or elective offices so long as he fulfils the conditions laid down in the constitution. There is no ban on the ground of class, creed, race or sex. Every individual has the fullest opportunity for work and service through which he can win the confidence of Congressmen. It is a purely voluntary organization and has no external sanction for enforcing its decisions on its members except that of public opinion among them. The most powerful sanction is the will and determination of the Congressman himself. It is, therefore, the duty and responsibility of each individual member to keep the organization pure and above suspicion. There must be no bogus enrolment of members on the register. Elections must be free from all unfair means. It is not, unfortunately, possible today to say that all these conditions are fulfilled. Every Congressman can, however, help to remove these defects which weaken the organization and lessen its usefulness. We must remember that the Congress organization, its activities and all that it stands

for are constantly in the limelight—limelight of a nature which very often magnifies the proportions of its defects. Inasmuch as the Congress can possess no strength except that which it derives from the confidence it can inspire in the general public and amongst its own members, it must be above corruption and dishonesty of any kind. Not only must Congressmen see to it that enrolment of members is honestly done and no foul play takes place in elections, but where public questions are concerned they must help in arriving at just and proper decisions without fear or favour, without being influenced by party, communal or class considerations. For it must be remembered that the Congress can retain its national character and hold its head high only it can command universal confidence and respect. To the extent that the Congress as a whole or even any of its humblest branches moves away from its moorings, it loses its national and moral character and ceases to be the power for good that it otherwise can and should be.

XV. Kisan Organization

Kisans and their dependents constitute nearly 85 % of the population of India. The thirteenfold constructive programme would have no value unless it served to help them. All work in the villages must conduce to their benefit, and no work which injures or ignores the interests of such a large proportion of the population can be said to be truly constructive. If the items of the constructive programme have been intelligently understood, it will have been realized that the truest service of the *kisans* consists in carrying out the items in letter and in spirit. Viewed in this light, a separate organization of *kisans* is unnecessary. They (the *kisans*) should join and make their own the Congress organization which, if it cannot help and save them, will cease to be the power it today is. But it will be useful to give here some detailed advice in regard to helping the peasantry.

For *kisans* to have specific grievances against their landlords or the Government is a matter of common occurrence. They are generally of an urgent nature and

cannot wait for redress until Swaraj has been attained. It is the duty and function of every worker to identify himself with the *kisans* wherever such real grievances exist and to help and guide them in obtaining redress. Negotiation based on non-violence often succeeds in securing the necessary redress; but if it fails, the peasants have a right to resort to civil disobedience or even non-payment of rent or revenue. The more widely felt the grievance, the fairer the demand; and provided the movement is conducted in a non-violent way, the surer and quicker the success will be.

There are other troubles which *kisans* have to face. They often quarrel among themselves and in resorting to litigation ruin themselves. A worker who has been able through his service to command the respect and confidence of the people should often succeed in settling the differences and stopping litigation. The same applies to minor disputes between peasant and landlord.

It is, however, necessary to emphasize the fact that no organization should be used for exploiting the peasantry for political or other purposes. If Congressmen serve them rightly, the *kisans* will come into the Congress organization of their own free will, recognizing its utility, honesty and power. Such allegiance will be steady and unselfish and hence far more valuable than if they were asked to join a political organization on the basis of their self-interest or if a separate organization for them were started.

Work of a most important and far-reaching character can be done among *kisans* by introducing the system of co-operative farming. Agriculture ceases to be a profitable business, if the holdings become too small. And with our laws of inheritance it is impossible to prevent sub-division of property. But joint cultivation by individuals, each contributing his share of labour and dividing the produce, is possible and advisable. Improvements in methods of agriculture which the individual may not be able to afford himself can be co-operatively utilized. Similar economy may be introduced in the matter of maintenance of livestock. Co-operative farming offers a vast field for very useful work.

As work on behalf of *kisans* is of such great importance, it will be well for the Congress to have a special department for them as it has for foreign affairs etc.

XVI. LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Labour employed in factories is a group which has been organized in Trade Unions. It is a small group compared with peasants. But being concentrated in industrial cities it is easy of approach and organization. Being engaged in handling machinery and tools requiring intelligence, it is supposed also to possess more intelligence, as a class than peasants. There is no harm in organizing labour for the benefit of labour, but they must not be exploited for political purposes. As in the case of *kisans* much of the constructive programme is bound to benefit and should be worked among them. Trade Unions are necessary to secure for labour just and fair conditions of work and social amenities, but sometimes they are formed solely for organizing strikes for creating trouble. While strikes are necessary if the employer is unreasonable and unbending, they should be resorted to only in the last instance when every other method for getting fair play and justice has failed. The guidance and help of good workers among labour is very essential. Gandhiji has claimed that the Ahmedabad Labour Union founded by him is a model for all labour. Workers should study its history and constitution and try to bring such unions into being wherever possible.

XVII. STUDENT ORGANIZATION

Students form another important group among whom work is necessary. But this work is of a different kind altogether. Students do not constitute a class whose interests conflict with those of another class and therefore should not really need an organization to protect and safeguard their interest. Educational authorities are public servants whose main duty it should be to prepare the youth committed to their charge to be good, healthy citizens, intellectually, physically and morally. An organization for students, therefore, on the lines of a Kisan Sabha or Trade Union is quite unnecessary. But circumstanced as we are today

the educational authorities are not public servants in the true sense of the term. They are the servants of the State whose interest does not coincide with that of the country. The education imparted by the British Government is intended for a particular purpose, and hence conflict arises between students actuated by national ideals and teachers controlled by anti-national power. So long as students depend on the State for their education and prospects in life it is impossible for them to fight it. Their embroilment in politics while they are in State institutions makes their education even less efficient than it is. A students' organization should, therefore, not be for the ventilation of the country's grievances and for enforcing redress thereof but for supplementing the deficiencies in the education imparted in existing institutions. It should be an organization calculated to make them efficient citizens and not for fighting political battles. This does not imply that students have no part to play in the freedom movement. They have, but they will do it more effectively if their time as students is usefully applied in studying particular as also current events and in preparing themselves for, rather than trying to participate in, the struggle. Those of course who feel the urge to do so will cut themselves adrift from State educational institutions and devote themselves to the service of the country. But they will then not remain members of the students' organizations. The constructive programme, however, is there for the students as for anyone else. They can make a valuable contribution to many of its items. They can certainly root out the canker of communal distrust and jealousy. They can root out untouchability from among themselves. They can spare some time daily for spinning and utilize their intelligence and mechanical skill in the improvement of the instruments. They have no excuse for not being clad in khadi. They can devote some of their spare time in the evenings towards adult education and the liquidation of illiteracy. They have special facilities for becoming proficient in their mother tongue and for learning the *Rashtra Bhasha.* They can help in the matter of social reform and bringing about a changed outlook as far as the status of woman is

concerned in their own families. They can make their own lives simple and contented and thus make a beginning towards the ideal of economic equality. They can spend part of their vacation in the service of the villages. There need be no conflict with authority or their parents if they give their time and attention to these and other items of the constructive programme. It will, on the other hand, give them very valuable opportunities for acquiring practical knowledge and making useful contacts which will stand them in good stead in later life and enable them to meet the demands bound to be made on them as citizens of a free country. A students' organization based and conducted on these lines will fulfil a crying need and help to unite them in a common bond of service. Devoted workers are needed who can win the love and confidence of the student world and bring into their ranks that discipline and unity which are so badly lacking today. Workers must be free from passion or prejudice and utterly unselfish. They must not be liable to be carried away by gusts of passing enthusiasm or depressed by the chill air of dejection. They must work with confidence and faith and an understanding of youth.

Conclusion

Gandhiji's pamphlet on the constructive programme has shown clearly the close link between it and the struggle for freedom. There is no Indian, whatever his school of political thought, whatever his community, who does not desire complete freedom for his country. There is not a single item in the programme which can be termed controversial. It is all-embracing and all-inclusive. The humblest and the tallest amongst us can find plenty of room for self-expression therein. It applies equally to men and women, young and old. Indeed a very great contribution can be expected from women. Let me hope that it will enthuse all and be worked with intelligence, energy, faith and vigour so that India may come into her own at the earliest possible moment.